



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Tkaczyk Calls on State Ed Dept to Study Impact of Common Core, Testing on Children with Special Needs

CECILIA TKACZYK November 22, 2013

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State Legislators from the Capitol Region have raised concerns that the Common Core curriculum and standardized testing are inconsistent with Federal laws designed to guarantee a quality education for children with special needs.

They requested that the State Education Department dedicate one of their upcoming public forums on Common Core to the curriculum's impact on children with special needs.

The Legislators – State Senators Cecilia Tkaczyk and Neil Breslin and Members of Assembly Patricia Fahy, John McDonald and Phil Steck, notified Education Commissioner John King that subjecting school children with special needs to standardized curriculums and testing is not consistent with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress enacted IDEA in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive an appropriate public education, like all other children.

To comply with the Federal law, New York State develops Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for school children receiving special education services, who often cannot work at their own grade level. The IEP is developed to help these children learn outside the standardized methodology and curriculum. It sets reasonable learning goals for the child and outlines the

services that will be made available.

“In that the IDEA is based upon the rights of a child with disabilities to receive an education appropriate to their disabilities and abilities, the application of Common Core Standards is not compatible with many of the provisions of the IDEA,” the legislators wrote in their letter to King.

The Legislators requested that the State Education Department dedicate at least one of their upcoming Common Core public forums on how the new standards impact children with special needs.

Senator Tkaczyk said, “I have heard from many teachers and parents of children with special needs and it is clear that the new standards and exhaustive testing are having a particularly troubling effect on these vulnerable children, their families and teachers. Creating stress and frustration for these young people with special needs is not the way to foster a desire to learn. A special forum focused on the experiences of these children would help ensure a quality education for all.”

Assemblywoman Pat Fahy said, “Commissioner King has taken an important step in working with us to address implementation and testing concerns related to the new Common Core standards. The concerns raised by parents and educators of special needs students, however, are particularly disturbing. A separate forum for these sensitive, yet complex issues is needed.”

Senator Neil Breslin said, “Parents of children with special needs have expressed many concerns regarding the implementation of the Common Core standards and how they apply to their children. I believe it is imperative that a forum be scheduled to determine how the Common Core standards are affecting children with special needs. The Individuals with

Disabilities Act (IDEA) was enacted to ensure that children with disabilities receive an education appropriate to their needs and abilities. Ensuring that the Common Core standards are consistent with this intent is of utmost importance.”

Assemblyman John T. McDonald III said, "The challenges and confusion over the implementation of the Common Core Standards have silenced the concerns regarding those children with special needs. This request is to open the dialogue as there are many concerns that have been brought forward by those that I represent. These concerns are legitimate and worthy of a sincere dialogue.”

The full letter to Education Commissioner King follows:

November 8, 2013

Dear Dr. King:

We are writing as a follow-up on the forums that you and the State Education Department have now undertaken. Thank you for taking time to meet with parents, teachers, students and staff in school districts around the state to listen to the many concerns regarding the “Common Core Standards” and its implementation.

In addition to being state legislators, we all serve on relevant legislative committees. We are also parents, and some of us are former school board members. Together, we all have reservations about the Common Core Standards, and their application and implementation in particular.

From around the state and throughout our districts, parents and teachers are raising concerns in regard to the Common Core Standards and children with special needs. In

addition to these concerns, some of the requirements of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) also directly impact the ability of teachers to work with children with special needs. These children are often not working at their own grade level, and therefore should be exempted from most testing. A child's IEP is a plan developed to help them learn outside the standardized methodology and curriculum, consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In that the IDEA is based upon the rights of a child with disabilities to receive an education appropriate to their disabilities and abilities, the application of Common Core Standards is not compatible with many of the provisions of the IDEA.

To that end, we are respectfully requesting the incorporation into your schedule of a forum dedicated to how the Common Core Standards and the APPR impacts children with special needs.

We appreciate your consideration of this request, and would be pleased to talk with you or your staff in regard to making this possible.

Very truly yours,

Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk

Senator Neil D. Breslin

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

Assemblyman John McDonald

Assemblyman Phil Steck

